NUMB. XXI.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

——— Natio Comœda eſt.
——— Ridiculum acri. Ho[illegible]

MONDAY, JUNE 1. 1724.

THERE is an Excellent Saying in ſome Old Author, to whom I would pay the due Deference of a Quotation, If I could as well remember his Name, as I recollect his Words, which ſeem to flow from an equal Meaſure of Wiſdom and Virtue, and are as follow. *I had rather deliver out a ſolid Satisfaction, among the Sober and the Grave, by telling Truth; than be Pleaſant among the Gay, in telling Tales; becauſe, if I be not altogether ſo Pleaſant, I may be Uſeful; and, perhaps, I might do Hurt, in being (what the World calls) altogether Agreeable.* According to this, I ſhall behave my ſelf like a *PLAIN-DEALER*; and where I find, that I can't tickle Men out of Folly by genteel Railery, I will grow a little more ſevere, as Occaſion ſhall require, and now and then tell a plain Truth, that cannot be avoided, and ſhall be ſure to ſting.

THE *Coquette*, and *Ned Volatile*, have been greatly Indulged in their Propenſities to talk much; and, have plentifully enjoyed their Alternate Starts of Humour and Pleaſantry; nay, they have been permitted to break in upon one another; ſometimes, with unexpected Vollies of ſmart Raillery, which might, perhaps, have been carried to unwarrantable Lengths, and attended with ill Conſequences, if they had not been, ſometimes, over-awed by the Preſence of Us of a more ſedate Turn; and ſometimes, ſeaſonably parted, by the Interpoſition of the *Major*, and timely relieved from one another in thoſe briſk Onſets, in which Temper and Prudence had the leaſt Share.

IF giving the Publick an Account of the little Infirmities of this pair of Scufflers, has had its proper Tendency towards the Cure of any *Noted Impertinents*, of either Sex, who have a Flux in their Heads, and ſomewhat nearly reſembling the Perpetual Motion in their Tongues, I ſhall not think that I have as yet offended the Gravity of my Character, or loſt any Time, in penning down ſuch Levities, the Knowledge of which, rightly conveyed, produces Conſequences of ſo much Importance to the Quiet and Repoſe of the more ſerious part of the Humane Species. Thus far I can ſay, from what has lately fallen within my own Obſervation, That ſeveral gay Parts, which I have diſcover'd, of the Converſation between *Ned* and the *Coquette*, have excited an unuſual Vein of Merriment among many of my young Readers; but, tho' I muſt confeſs, I had a ſecret *Pleaſure* in finding them ſo *pleaſed*; yet I ſhould have been delighted, in a more exquiſite Degree, if I had found my Writings, taking a much better Effect, had ſtirr'd up, in ſome of them, whom it wou'd have become, a little more *Self-Reflection*, and *Leſs Laughter*. Thoſe, who only laugh at the Follies of others, which I deſcribe, give me the worſt half of their Applauſe; till they laugh thoſe Follies out of themſelves, they only ſhew, That they think me a mere pleaſant and facetious old Fellow, and deprive me of the better Half of that good Opinion, which I ſhould be chiefly ambitious they would entertain of me, That I can be, at the ſame Time, a Uſeful and a Profitable Companion.

I VERY lately ſaw the moſt penetrating pair of Eyes that ever ſhone upon Paper, and as pretty Lips as ever grac'd Utterance, by their Motion, very buſily Employed upon that *PLAIN-DEALER*, wherein I deſcribed the laſt Tongue-Skirmiſh, which happened between the *Two Talkatives* of our ASSEMBLY. She read it to her ſelf, and ever, now and then, laugh'd out heartily. I could juſt gueſs, by obſerving, where her Eye was fix'd, what Paſſages tickled her the moſt, and found 'em to be thoſe, which threw the forward Humour of the two Combatants into the ſtrongeſt Pitch of Ridicule. I was in hopes, That, if any of that Female Infirmity, which ſhe ſo heartily laugh'd at in Others, fell to her Share, ſhe would ever after carefully avoid appearing in the ſame Light, in which ſhe had ſeen her Neighbour make ſo ungraceful a Figure, and whom ſhe confeſs'd, by ſuch *ſenſible Signs*, to be a proper Object of Ridicule. But, to my very great Wonder, ſhe no ſooner had laid the Paper out of her Hands, but ſhe Incontinently exerciſed thoſe Lips, with ten Times more Velocity in *Talking*, than they ſeem'd to have in the *Courſe* of their *Reading*. Her Tongue abundantly out-gallop'd the *Coquette's*; and I am perſwaded, if *Ned Volatile* had been to ſtart with her upon equal Terms, ſhe would have fairly jocky'd him; He muſt have been quite diſtanced; — He would have loſt all Sight of her in the very firſt Flight of her Diſcourſe. Up got I, (no Room being given to take Notice of the ſhort Leave I took) and marched off, as faſt as ever my old Legs and my Oaken-Stick would help to carry me; and have been mightily diſcouraged, to ſee my Performances have ſo little Effect. I warrant, this pretty Goſſip, told the next Company ſhe fell into, That ſhe read my *Paper*, and, the Moment after, in utter Contempt and Diſgrace of the fine Moral palpably contained in it, bolted, and ſhot away into numberleſs Fooleries, and rambled into twenty Times as many Impertinencies as ſhe had done before. I have, indeed, often wonder'd, but now I ceaſe to wonder, That almoſt all Authors are ſo much given to read their own Works; It is, becauſe they apprehend, That they are otherwiſe in Danger of not being rightly read: And their Apprehenſion is too often juſtly Grounded. For can this pert Fair-One be properly ſaid to have *read* the *PLAIN-DEALER*? No, ſhe *ſaw* it indeed, but it is plain ſhe did not *read* it. At this Rate I muſt be obliged to turn *Lecturer* upon my own Works, and where there are any genteel Hints, I muſt Subſtitute rougher and coarſer in their Room, that they may not be too ſlender, and too fine for Sight, and eſcape Obſervation. It is certainly the Sign of a well-manner'd Writer, but juſt to touch upon the Verge of a ſevere Truth, and leave the reſt to a Reader's private Meditation. But if this Method proves ineffectual, it is, next to impoſſible, to preſerve the Character of *PLAIN-DEALER*, without ſaying ſomething

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ſomething that may ſeem very Severe and Uncomplaiſant. I will for once therefore forbear to ſay, That thoſe fine Eyes did not penetrate into the Truths, that lay before them, and that thoſe Lips could not properly be ſaid to be employ'd in Reading, when I gueſs'd them ſo to be employ'd by their Motion. But I ſhall, for the Future, without Scruple, declare, That any Eyes, let them appear never ſo beautiful, which look over any of theſe Papers, and at the ſame Time overlook the Morals recommended in each of them, are in a Manner as bad as blind; and that the only Grace in beautiful Lips, which are almoſt always in Motion, and ſcarce ever to the Purpoſe, conſiſts in the delicate Propriety of their Colour, which ſhews as if they bluſh'd for their Impertinence.

THE Gentlemen run over theſe Papers, as well as the Ladies, without reading them. They juſt ſtrike their Eye upon a Line, in which they conceive a Jeſt on ſome particular Perſon, then Laugh; and the next Day become more a Jeſt themſelves; and yet will not conſider, till they are told in plain Terms, That each of them is that *particular Perſon*, tho' he is kind enough to take the whole Blame upon himſelf, inaſmuch as he repreſents them all.

THE Odd Spark, whom my beſt Correſpondent, fair *Cleora*, very properly liken'd to a *Mercury Reverſed*, is the ſame odd Spark he was, and, what is worſe, has ſince that Time brought over Hundreds of Proſelites, to the ſame ſilly Faſhion; ſo that one would be apt to imagine, that there is nothing more wanting at this Time of Day, to make a Dreſs very popular, but ſhewing it firſt to be very Comical and Ridiculous. There ſeems to be, indeed, a general Emulation, among the Faſhion-Mongers, which of them can be the moſt Whimſical, as the only ſure Way to be the moſt Taking and Succeſsful.

THESE *Mercuries* conſiſt moſtly of your Little, Smart, Dapper Blades, tho' ſometimes very tall Men have Condeſcended to Come into the Faſhion, which makes them appear to have no Heads at all, or elſe, as if half the Head lay hid in the Bag behind it.

IT is an extraordinary Sight to ſee the whole *Mall* crowded with this Kind of Puppets; And yet more ſo, when Examining theſe Childiſh Figures, you read in their Faces, that they generally conſiſt of Perſons from Five and Twenty, to upwards of Forty Years of Age. Some Fops of Fifty odd, make the firſt Decays of Age remarkable in them by this Dreſs, which would be otherwiſe Unnoticed. A Jolly old Friend of mine, that was taking an Airing with me in the Park the other Day, being amazed at the Sight, ſpoke thus: 'What muſt be in theſe Peoples Minds, *ſaid he*, that, 'in order to look more Gay than ordinary, make 'themſelves appear Hoary about the Head, juſt like 'the Pictures of *Old Winter*, in the midſt of *Summer*, 'when every Thing in the Vegetable Creation, looks 'Freſh, and Green, and Flouriſhing about them? The 'very Breezes ſeem to tell them, That they blow 'to refreſh them, while they are Suffocating themſelves; and would ſweep away that Load of Duſt, 'which is enough to ſwelter them, if they had not ingeniouſly and induſtriouſly prevented it, if they had 'not pour'd a Kind of Artificial Sweat over their Temples, and Cemented the Powder with Orange-Butter.'

MANY of theſe Sparks *pretend* to read my Papers; but can they be ſaid to read them, who, without once looking into their Minds, continue to cultivate the Out ſide of their Heads after ſuch a prodigious and prepoſterous Rate? Here I am forced to turn *Lecturer* again, and deſire them to look more after the Furniture within, and rather Match that to the Complection of Age, than grow quite White-headed ſo many Years before Nature intended they ſhould ſo much as grow Grey. As to the Powderers of Fifty, I muſt tell them, That even I, who am in my grand Climacterick, and have gone thro' the Snow of ſo many Winters, am not half ſo much Powder'd as they, and that therefore it cannot look Natural and Decent in them.

TO how much better Advantage might they ape us, if their Perruque-Makers would again furniſh them with *Grizzles*? Whereas this *perfect White* can never be thought to look like the natural Covering of a Human Head, but either in Childhood, or when thoſe, that have been Men, deſiſt to be Men, and return to their Childhood again.

IF we take a Survey from the Head downwards, of every Part of their Dreſs, there is not one, but what is equally Prepoſterous.

IF a Man, for Example, was to take a Review of the Officers and Soldiers, provided they had Sleeves of the Modern Cut, he would take the Army for an Army of Invalids. The Company of *Taylors* ſeem to have forgot themſelves, and to want the Aſſiſtance of the Company of *Barber-Surgeons*, to Inſtruct them in ſome of the Rules of Anatomy, which ſeem abſolutely neceſſary to compleat the Art of Making Cloaths, and, without which, the Elbows of Men, that are viſibly out of Joint, and ſtrangely Miſplaced and Diſfigured, can never be rightly and cleverly Set.

THE young Fellows have drop'd down the Flaps and Folds of their Coats, very near as Low as the Clocks of their Stockings, ſo that ſcarce any Thing of the Leg is to be ſeen but Ancle; And they ſeem to be pulling down their Cloths lower and lower, that they may be more and more like Petticoats, while the Women are tucking up theirs ſhorter and ſhorter, that they may get rid of them, becauſe, if they grow a little ſhorter, there will be a decent Neceſſity for Converting them into *Breeches*.

I OBSERVE likewiſe, That the Ladies go open-breaſted in *Winter*, tho' the Dappers Button up to the Chin in *Summer*; and have Garniſhed the Folds of their Coats with Supernumerary Buttons, the Uſe of which I cannot poſſibly Learn, tho' I have applied to thoſe who are very deeply read in all Parts of Dreſs. What I would propoſe, is, That they would have Buttons and Button-Holes down the Seam of the Back, juſt as they have before, and ſo be Button'd up to the Pole, as they are to the Chin, which will be of great Uſe, becauſe then, according as they are very Lazy, or otherwiſe, they may be unbuttoned before, or elſe, as Ladies are, unlaced, *behind*, by a Servant.

IF theſe Alterations ſhould be carried on a little further, my Friend *Gunter*'s Predictions, lately publiſh'd, concerning the Mutation of Sexes in this Nation, muſt be allowed to be very punctually verified.

THE *Maſquerades* in the *Hay-Market*, will not only, for a Time, but Entirely be laid aſide; tho', methinks, if ſuch mighty Alterations in our Manners and Appearance ſhould proceed, *Maſquerades* would then be more uſeful, than they have hitherto been, becauſe, perhaps, the decent Habits, that were worn about a Dozen Years ago, would be uſed as Diſguiſes and Maſquerading-Habits now, and ſo, at laſt, have their Turn to come in Faſhion again, and be worn publickly once more. It would be a Method to preſerve *Engliſh* Merchants and others, whoſe Affairs have kept them many Years beyond Sea, from being ſurprized at their Return, who, if they found us dreſs'd after the preſent Mode, heard our Officers ſinging Scraps of *Italian* Airs after Eunuchs, Beaus Complimenting one another, and Wits making Jeſts in *High Dutch*, while old Women were Talking Politicks in *French*, would not believe, we were the ſame Generation of People, that they left behind them in this Iſland.

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